

Mecca. Their visit -was seized upon as testimony of the religious freedom existing across the border. When the Iranian University professors returned home in January, 1945, from their visit to Uzbekistan, they brought back a greeting from Ishan Baba Khan, Grand Mufti of Tashkent, to the Director of the Moslem Theological College in Teheran.²⁰

The greatest efforts to dispense Soviet religious propaganda in Iran were made in 1945. In the summer of that year Sheikh ul-Islam Ali zadeh, the Chairman of the Moslem Board of Transcaucasia, and a group of leading Moslems from Soviet Azerbaijan visited Iran. Soviet sources²¹ maintained that the visit was in response to an invitation from Sheikh ul-Islam Malayeri of Iran, but no confirmation ever carne from the Iranian side. Ali-zadeh and his aides visited Tabriz, Qazvin, and Teheran, and in the latter city were received by the Shah. According to reports circulating at that time in Teheran the Soviet Moslems endeavored to impress their Iranian colleagues with the freedom they enjoyed in the Soviet Union and with the benevolent attitude of the government toward them. Malayeri and his entourage were reported to have listened attentively to these persuasions and to have acknowledged politely their faith in the information conveyed. At that time many Iranians were still interned in Erak for their co-operation with the German fifth column, and the end of the war with Germany raised a popular clamor for their release. Since some of these interneers were under Soviet guard, the Soviet government w^ras in a position to set them free. The Iranian divines, anxious to see them liberated, addressed on their behalf a

plea to the Soviet theologians. With a truly oriental cunning they endeavored to convince their Soviet colleagues with reasoning which, if reconstructed, might have sounded like this:

⁽ⁱ⁾You say that your relations with the government are excellent. We are glad to hear that. We here also enjoy very good relations

20 The members of the Iranian delegation included Academician Said Nafisi; Majlis Deputy Gonabadi; a newspaper editor, Fernemsh; Deputy Governor General Farrukhi of the province of Khorasan; and others. The delegation "made special note of the tremendous organizational successes that have been achieved by Soviet Moslems" (*U.S.SJR.. Information Bulletin*, Washington, August 14, 1946, p. 19).

21 *Ibid.*